

One of the most impressive congregations was concentrated on a flood basin with long grass and small Acacia trees, which cattle had found. It was one of the last with green grass, and so was well dunged and clearly rich in food insects. This area of open shallow water attracted a great assembly of duck, including several hundreds of Pintail *Anas acuta* Linnaeus, Shoveller *A. clypeata* Linnaeus, Garganey *A. querquedula* Linnaeus and Teal *A. crecca* Linnaeus, as well as vast numbers of waders including Stilts *Himantopus himantopus* (Linnaeus). Hundreds of White Storks *Ciconia ciconia* (Linnaeus) and European Cranes, together with a few Abdim's Storks, were also present. Cattle Egrets were numerous, and there were a few Openbill Storks taking snails washed out of a canal, also a few Glossy Ibises *Plegadis falcinellus* (Linnaeus). Overhead flew terns, pratincoles, swallows and martins, with a few bee-eaters, and on the ground hundreds of wagtails of the genus *Budytes*.

The grasslands of the Sudan abound with insect life, which unless disturbed remains unavailable to many birds, particularly those that take their prey on the wing. Feeding associations involving larger creatures such as mammal plus bird, man/vehicle plus bird, or larger bird with smaller, seem under the circumstances the natural and logical method by which food can be obtained from such a difficult, yet highly productive, environment as the tall grass of the Sudanese plains. These associations are thus to the mutual advantage of many species, and appear to be harmonious gatherings with little obvious competition.

I am grateful to C. W. Benson and Captain C. R. S. Pitman for advice and assistance in the finalisation of this note.

References:

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The nest and nestling of the Short-tailed Paradigalla *Paradigalla brevicauda* (Paradisaeidae)

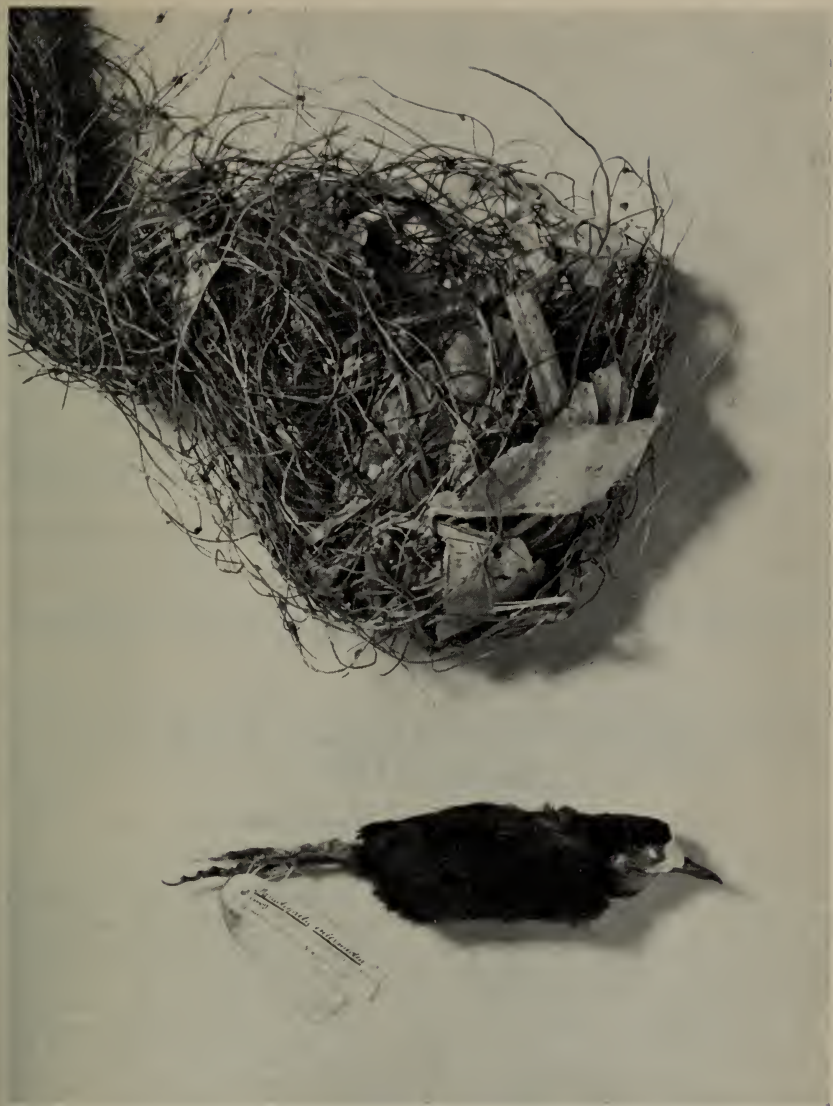
by C. B. Frith

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Although the birds of paradise have been comparatively well studied as a group there is still a great deal that Gilliard, in his recent monograph (1969), records as "unknown", particularly for the nest and eggs of a number of species. Thus it was with much satisfaction that I found a nest of the Short-tailed Paradigalla (*Paradigalla brevicauda*) in the British Museum collections at Tring, Hertfordshire. This nest was collected with a nestling which I later found in the skin collection in London.

The two specimens described here have been known to exist since their collection, and were referred to by Gilliard (1969), but until now have not been described. They were collected by C. Boden Kloss during the Wollaston Expedition on 27th January 1913 at Camp 9, Utakwa River, Dutch New Guinea, 5,500 feet. (Ogilvie-Grant, 1915).

The nestling (1916.5.30.1074), which is a male, is much like adult birds in general appearance (see plate). The feathering on the body is soft and down-like (more so on the underparts), and is sooty-black with a tinge of deep brown throughout and the back shows a slight purple sheen in certain lights.



Nest and nestling of *Paradigalla brevicauda*.

The crown and nape has not gained the glossy blue-green plumage of the adult, but is uniform in colour with the rest of the plumage. The wattles about the face are the same shape and form as they are on the adult female and of similar size in proportion to the bird. The egg tooth is still visible. All wing feathers are about half grown, but the tail is not visible. The feathering on the upper mandible and throat is just beginning to grow. The measurements are—tarsi 32 mm., wings 83 mm., bill (from posterior of nostril) 16 mm.

Unfortunately the collector had tied the nest into a compact ball, no doubt for transportation, and I cannot be certain of the exact original shape. The

photograph illustrates the nest in what I feel is a position close to its original form. It (N63.1) is a bulky cup made mostly of many leaves, both large and broad and thin and long. The broad leaves measure up to 125mm. long by 35mm. wide. A few of the thin, long leaves measure up to, and in excess of, 160mm. by 16mm. Around the outer leaves is a sparse mesh of creeper tendrils. These tendrils (which do not have enough characters to be identified) are more profuse on one side of the nest and rise above the cup in a thick rope-like knot. Possibly this was part of a live vine that the bird used for material and support at the nest site.

There are a few small odd pieces of moss and fern leaf around the outside of the structure, mostly near the rim of the cup. The nest cup is lined with a thin layer of fine black hair-like fibres, possibly fern rootlets, which measure c. 200mm. in length and c. 0.5mm. in thickness. There are a number of dried droppings in the bottom of the cup.

The exterior measurements are 138mm. in diameter and 111mm. deep, not including the vine "rope". The interior measurements, which are rough approximations due to the tying of the nest, are c. 83 mm. in diameter and 66mm. deep. Unfortunately there is no information regarding the situation of the nest or the habitat.

I am grateful to Frank Greenaway and Tim Parmenter for the photograph.

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- Gilliard, E. T. 1969. *Birds of Paradise and Bower-birds*. London.
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The European Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe* (L.) in southern Africa

by R. P. Borrett and H. D. Jackson

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Introduction: There are very few records of the European Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe* (L.) in southern Africa. Alexander (1900: 87) supposedly obtained a male in winter plumage at Zumbo on 16th January 1899. Wilde secured one at Salisbury in 1915, but this specimen was overlooked by Priest (1935), Roberts (1940) and Vincent (1952), and was not reported in the literature until 1957 (Smithers, Irwin and Paterson). Brooke (1959) reported seeing a solitary bird at Barberspan in the western Transvaal on 22nd October 1958. A specimen taken on 22nd December 1963, by von Maltzahn (1964) near Sissekab in South West Africa was identified as *Oenanthe oenanthe* by Prof. J. M. Winterbottom; von Maltzahn also records that he saw two more a week later. Vernon (pers. comm.) saw two on 27th December 1964, at Rainham Farm, Salisbury. Finally, Jackson (1969) reported seeing two, one in partial breeding plumage, on 17th December 1968, at Sua Spit in Botswana, ca. 20° 52' S., 26° 12' E.

Alexander's record has been rejected by Benson, Brooke, Dowsett and Irwin (1970); this specimen cannot be found and there is good reason for believing that it may have been a young *O. pileata*. We have examined the specimens taken by Wilde and by von Maltzahn and find that von Maltzahn's specimen is an immature *O. pileata*; we are obliged therefore to reject this record also. Until recently then Wilde's Salisbury specimen provided the